



PSC NEWS

Missouri Public Service Commission

Contact: Kevin Kelly

Phone: (573) 751-9300

Governor Office Building, Suite 900

FY-04-188

PSC STAFF FILES REPORT AND COMPLAINT IN MANCHESTER NATURAL GAS INCIDENT

Jefferson City (April 28, 2004)---The Staff of the Missouri Public Service Commission has concluded its investigation and has filed a Gas Incident Report and Complaint Case regarding a December 11, 2003, natural gas explosion and fire at #6 Hagers Mill Court in Manchester, Missouri. The explosion and subsequent fire destroyed the single-family residence and damaged adjacent residential structures. Four people in the residence at the time of the explosion sustained various injuries. There were no fatalities.

The PSC Staff determined, based upon its investigation, that the probable cause of the incident was the escape of natural gas from the service tee connection for the service line providing natural gas service to #6 Hagers Mill Court. The escape of the natural gas, according to the PSC Staff Report, was due to a pullout of the service line from the compression coupling at the natural gas service tee. The Staff Report states: "Subsequent investigation revealed that the joint between the service tee and service line had not been assembled properly during initial installation in 1974. In the time interval since installation, tree roots had placed longitudinal force on the service line and the pullout resulted."

According to the report, the tree and associated tree roots were growing in the location of the distribution main, service tee and service line. Staff noted that the longitudinal forces eventually exceeded the pullout strength of the compression coupling. Staff states in its report: "While the forces imparted by the tree and roots may have been sufficient to result in a failure of a properly installed fitting at some point in time, the absence of a tubular stiffener significantly increased the likelihood of occurrence." Commission regulations required that an internal tubular stiffener be used in plastic pipe when assembling a compression coupling.

The PSC Staff Report noted that based on inspections of work performed by the same crew in the weeks immediately preceding and succeeding the incident site installation, no additional service tees were identified with a missing tubular stiffener.

As a result of its investigation, the PSC Staff has filed a complaint against Laclede Gas Company alleging Laclede violated a Public Service Commission regulation regarding proper assembly of plastic pipe mechanical joints. The Staff's Report states: "The Staff believes that the probable violation of the Commission pipeline safety regulation contributed to this incident by reducing the force necessary to cause failure of the compression coupling." The PSC Staff has asked the Commission to authorize the PSC Staff to go to circuit court to seek penalties against Laclede Gas Company. If the case goes to court, the court will ultimately decide whether there should be penalties assessed and the amount.